DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 957 PS 012 113

AUTHOR Engberg, Agnete
TITLE Early Childhood- and Pre-school Education in Denmark.
INSTITUTION Ministry of Education, Copenhagen (Denmark).
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 12p.; Contains small print.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childhood Needs; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Finance; Educational Legislation; *Educational Objectives; Foreign Countries; Kindergarten; Nursery Schools; Preschool Education; *Program Content; Transitional Classes; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Denmark

ABSTRACT

These two booklets provide overviews of educational programs for young children in Denmark. The first booklet briefly outlines recent initiatives in preschool education. Four types of preschool institutions currently in operation are indicated. The major portion of the booklet is focused on the aims and methods of day nurseries, nursery schools/kindergartens, and preschool classes. In conclusion, school administration, school finance and teacher training are discussed. The second booklet presents a summary of an investigation of various dimensions of home-school cooperation in the years immediately before and after children start school. Basic pedagogical and organizational issues, which may require changes in legislation or new regulations, are raised in the discussion of preschool classes, day care problems, home-school cooperation, the curriculum, and needed change in the structure of large schools. Specific legislative changes and an experimental program are recommended. In conclusion, the economic consequences of the proposals are pointed out. (Author/RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED198957

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Early Childhood- and Pre-school Education in Denmark

by

Agnete Engberg

Educational Inspector

PS012113

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Ministry of Education, International Relations Division
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Ministry of Education
Frederiksholms Kanal 21
1220 Copenhagen K.
Denmark
1979

2

Early Childhood- and Pre-school Education in Denmark

by

Agnete Engberg
Educational Inspector

1. In Denmark education is compulsory for all children within the age of 7 to 16 years. Quite a number of children below compulsory school-age does, however, frequent different types of pre-school institutions.

Denmark is a highly industrialized country, and the development throughout the years tends to create possibilities for children to be taken care of until the age of compulsory education. The following factors have been instrumental in this development:

The family structure is undergoing certain changes. Married women are now to an increasing extent working outside their homes, and the average number of children in families is decreasing.
Society is being urbanized to the extent that most families now live in urban areas, often in flats, in which possibilities for children's play and other activities of traffic are limiting the natural necessity and desire of children to move about.

A growing general interest for education of small children seems to be present in the population, and this has created a considerable demand for places in institutions for children under the age of compulsory education.

The Danish Goverment has in 1975 set down at National Committee for Pre school children. This committee is expected to

examine all conditions concerning pre-school children and their families (expenses parents' working times, subsidies, medical and psychological prevention, town planning, traffic planning, day institutions and parents' education).

The Minister of Education has in 1975 appointed a committee on cooperation between home, pre-school, school and leisure time axtivities for children in the 5-8 years group.

The Minister of Cultural Affairs has in 1975 appointed a committee on childrens culture.

2. Different types of pre-school institutions.

The following types of institutions for the different age groups are being operated in this country:

1st April 1978	Number of institutions	Number of places
Vuggestuer (day nurseries) for children 0 to 3 years	508	17.578
Børnehaver (nursery schools - kindergartens) for children 3 to 7 years	2.144	91.719
Institutions with integrated age-groups o-14 years of which the main part is 3-7 years	226	14.575
Børnehaveklasser (pre-school classes) for children 5 to 7 years	3.105	55.500

The table shows that about 10% of all children under 3 years of age and about 35% of children between 3 and 7 years are frequenting nursery schools or integrated institutions. About 60% of children 5-7 years are frequenting pre-school classes. In addition a considerable

number of children - 27.5oo - are being taken care of in publicly supervised private day-care foster homes.

Prognostical estimates for these fields of institutions shows that by 1982 there will be a demand for the following number of places:

Day nurseries and private day-care foster homes	about	69.ooo
Nursery schools, Kindergartens and integrated institutions	-	132.ooo
Pre-school classes	-	65.ooo

3. Aims and methods laid down and applied in institutions for pre-school education

The aim of these institutions is to supplement and support the children's homes through offering small children care and participation in educational activities in development oriented surroundings organized according to age and individual needs of the child.

Day nurseries are all-day institutions normally fitted out with facilities for 3o children. The institutions will normally be divided up into groups according to the age of the children, but during the last few years there has been a tendency to divide the children in family-groups, i.e. into groups consisting of children of different age, in which 3 to 4 children are being taken care of by a definite teacher.

The work in day nurseries is organized primarily according to the needs of the children. Their physical needs and care are naturally the main concern of the institution, but it is also endeavoured to establish a close emotional and social contact with the children.

It is a characteristic of day nurseries, that they have strict hygienic regulations and a somewhat rigid daily routine, but new pedagogical and psychological knowledge of children's development has brought about that an increasing emphasis is being laid on the establishment of a stimulating environment, in which the child is subjected to many different experiences and is being trained in independence, but at the same time is given possibilities for attaching itself emotionally to the person in whose care it is (mother's substitute).

Co-operation between parents of the children and the personnel of the institution is being developed and so is pedagogical supervision of the institu-

tions. Certain minimum requirements of standard with regard to buildings, sanitary installations and equipment must be fulfilled for recognition.

Nursery schools/kindergartens may be subdivided into two main types, all-day institutions and part-day institutions.

All-day institutions have developed from the asylums or orphanages that in the beginning of the 19th century were established as social philantropic institutions mainly catering for the children of working-class families, in which mothers on account of their work outside their homes were in need of institutions, where their children could be nursed and taken care of in stead of being left to themselves.

Part-day institutions came later and were from the beginning catering for the children of other strata of the population, mainly socially and economically privileged families, who had realized the educational benefit to their children in being together with other children their own age under the care of specially trained teachers.

In time the destinction between the two types of institutions has more or less disappeared, and today it has only partly relevance to distinguish between social and pedagogical institutions. At all-day institutions a number of children will normally spend only part of the day at the institution, and others are there the whole day on account of the benefit to themselves and their own development, and not on account of an actual social need in the traditional sense of the word. This development is in line with the social and political viewpoint, that all citizens should have equal access to make use of public facilities such as schools, libraries, hospitals, recreation centres, open-air grounds etc. - a viewpoint adopting the

principle that the authorities should make such services available to all.

The nursery schools/kindergartens are in principle alike as far as their educational aims and their methods are concerned, and they are all a natural link in a social system with different tasks to be carried out, practical, medical, educational, social and cultural.

In spite of similarities the institutions vary to a certain extent. A nursery school/kindergarten will normally be organized so as to divide the children into groups the size of which will vary from 12 to 2o children according to age. A teacher will be responsible for each group of children and the daily routine and activities going on. Some nursery schools/kindergartens have now left the traditional grouping of children according to age and are in stead dividing them up into family-groups in which small children are together with older ones as children belonging to the same family. This grouping naturally puts the teacher in a different position with more varied demands on her as a teacher with responsibilities for children of different age and development.

The main objective of the care and education of the child in the nursery school /kindergarten is the physical and psychological needs of the child based on the psychology of the development of the child during its period of early childhood. The teacher must organize the daily routine of the institution, its work, play and other activities with a view to offering each child optimal development of body and mind in environments that are stimulating social development of the child and development of independence and personality.

The daily work of the nursery school /kindergarten is characterized by a certain fixed daily routine and rhythm with liberal opportunities for variations. The day of the child is organized so as to leave ample time for play in-doors or

out-of-doors according to preference and weather conditions. Much weight is placed on offering opportunities for varied and developing activities with a great variety of materials such as paint, clay, wood, textiles, paper and all kinds of things of the children's own making.

Through singing and playing with primitive musical instruments, exercises for small children and dramatical play, it is endeavoured to offer possibilities for experimenting, gaining experiences and expressing themselves.

Through the reading of stories and conversations with the child, its imagination and linguistic development is stimulated and it is being imparted an idea of the world outside their homes and the institutions.

The children who spend all day or several hours in the institution normally have a rest in the middle of the day, and a meal with fruits and milk is served.

In most nursery schools/kindergartens a certain percentage of the children (about 8 to 1o p.c.) will suffer from physical or psychical handicaps, and for the benefit of these as well as for normally developed children it is important that kindergarten teachers thoroughly observe the children and their behaviour in order to find out who are in need of special care or medical or psychological treatment, and refer them to specialists for treatment in or outside the institution. So far sufficient access to psychological consultation services has not been established, but medical services and educational supervision are available at least twice yearly.

Cooperation with the parents of the children is a natural obligation of nursery school-kindergarten personnel, and the parents participate in the leadership through representatives in the board and parents council. As a development towards still closer cooperation between leadership, personnel and parents, experiments at about 2o different institutions with collective leadership have been initiated after

official approval by the authorities.

Pre-school classes are under the authority of the Ministry of Education, and provision for the establishment of pre-school classes is given in the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act. As of 1 August 1980, municipal authorities are required to establish pre-school classes. Premises for these classes are made available in public and private schools, and the usual regulations for State subsidy for teachers salaries are applicable for pre-school classes.

The aims for pre-school education are to activate the children according to their age and level of development and to make them accustomed to the normal routine of school life. Instruction, proper, is deprecated. The methods used correspond in the main to those of the kindergarten for the same age-group. The children attend school 3 hours a day for 5 days a week, and the number of children in a class must not exceed 22.

In the pre-school classes as in the kindergarten all activities are centred around the special immediate needs of the child. It is endeavoured to train the senses and the motory skills of the children and to give them possibilities for expressing themselves in play, singing, dancing and other physical activities. They have free access to all kinds of material, to pictures, books and educational materials with which they may experiment and learn fundamental concepts on which to build their further development in school.

Social development is considered important, and through being together with other children they learn cooperation and consideration for others, and due to the fact that pre-school classes are in the same premises as regular school classes they participate in common activities of the school and get accustomed to the normal school life

and its routine of work and play.

Pre-school children have access to the special health services of the school, and it is important that physical defects or ailments in this way may be discovered at an early time before regular schooling begins. Through close observation and teachers' reports of the children's development, interests and behaviour school maturity tests may often be unnecessary.

Administration and Financing

Nursery schools/kindergartens are under the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs. They are either municipal institutions, self-owning or private institutions. Subsidies from the State and the Municipal Authorities are granted, but parents pay part of the expenses (35 p.c.).

Pre-school classes are, as mentioned, under the authority of the Ministry of Education, and most of them are thus located on the premises of the local municipal school (folkeskole), and fees are not paid. Private primary schools may also establish pre-school classes, and here small fees are paid.

The Training of Teachers for these Institutions and Schools

The teaching staff of nursery homes and kindergartens are either child welfare teachers (børneforsorgspædagoger) or kindergarten teachers (børnehavepædagoger), while the teaching staff of pre-school classes may be either kindergarten teachers or youth recreation-school teachers (fritidspædagoger).

During the last few years shortage of trained teachers for nursery homes and kindergartens has been considerable.

Due to the fact that the major part of the staff in these institutions are "børnehavepædagoger" a short description of their training is appropriate in this connection.

This type of teacher training takes place at special Teacher Training Colleges of which there are 26 in Denmark.

The training period is 3 years.

The prescribed curriculum to be studied is as follows:

Psychology, pedagogics, civics, social legislation, social policy, social medicine, music, physical education, workshop activities, dramatics, danish literature, music and art appreciation, natural sciences, speech and voice.

Courses are given in ethics, study techniques, first-aid, conversation techniques, special education instruction (remedial) and psychiatry.

About one third of the duration of the training consists of practical training at institutions in which the aim is training of the student's practical utilization of the acquired theoretical knowledge and skills in observation.

During the 3rd year of training the student must write a thesis on a topic of her own choice.

Many young people are demonstrating their interest in this type of teacher training and each year quite a number of qualified applicants have been refused admission to the seminaries due to lack of places and facilities. The number of male applicants has been increasing during the last few years and today about 2o% of the students at these special Teacher Training Colleges are men.

At the termination of the 3rd year of training examinations must be passed in the pedagogical and social subjects.

Further studies may be pursued at the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies.